

*The Senate*

And it is my view, Mr. Speaker, that if the Government is serious, if the Progressive Conservative Party is serious, if that party is truly progressive, if they intend to propose to this House a general process of consultation of all parties as called for by the Hon. Member, then I can give her the assurance that this party will very seriously consider any proposal for Senate reform. We are convinced that the Senate must be reformed, and certainly my friend for Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce) might agree with me that if we are to bring in a reform of our national institutions, we might as well discuss the monarchy, if our friends are as progressive as they claim! To the extent that the Hon. Member has referred to institutions that have no democratic reality, I would have like to hear her discuss the monarchy. I think this could be a most interesting subject, especially in the Conservative caucus.

Concerning her suggestion that regional representation is ensured by regional caucuses, I am doubtful about that. And not wandering from the subject, I say we now have a clear-cut case being discussed during every question period. And regional representation does not come from that side of the House either, Mr. Speaker. There is no basis to suggest the Conservative caucus is very active promoting the interests of Quebec in the Domtar case for instance. To that extent, suggesting that those regional caucuses are effective instruments for regional representation, I think the Hon. Member should look at what is being done in the actual world. She might lose a good deal of her illusions.

As far as the constitutional conference is concerned, there is a question of priorities, Mr. Speaker. We are open to Senate reform, we have always been open to that kind of reform, but I would rather have a federal-provincial conference that would deal with the real problems facing Canadians. If you would make a survey in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, and ask what is more important, unemployment or the Senate, I think the answer would be obvious.

If the Hon. Member for Duvernay talks to his constituents and asks them what is more important, the price of gas or the Senate, they will tell him: the price of gas. I am sure that if the Hon. Member for Gaspé (Mr. Marin) were to ask his constituents what is more important, the Senate or fisheries the answer would be obvious, the people in Gaspé are concerned about fisheries.

Mr. Speaker, I could name all the Hon. Members of this House. All of them without exception, including the Hon. Member for LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier). He would tell you that in his constituency the Senate is not a bread and butter issue for his constituents. He would tell you he is amused by the debates on Senate reform in this House, but this is not why he was elected. He never made that many election promises concerning the Senate, and he realizes that if the Government wants to waste its time discussing the Senate, they will lose touch with Canadian men and women.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think it is academic, amusing, and enlightening to hear the Hon. Member discuss a Private Member's Motion over which her leader does not seem to agree at all. We will see today if she is taken seriously by her colleagues, because the test of the Private Members' hour, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is quite simple. But I can assure the Hon. Member that even if I wanted to, I would not have an opportunity to speak until 6 p.m., because my time would have expired, but I can assure her that no Liberal Member will frustrate her, no Liberal Member—

**An Hon. Member:** You are alone!

**Mr. Lapierre:** Anyway, there is no problem with that! I can assure her that her motion, Mr. Speaker, will become fact if it depends on us alone. I can also tell her she should persevere . . . I see the Hon. Member opposite who hopefully will contribute to the debate so we may know what the people in his constituency are thinking, whether they favour Senate or forestry. I know that in Abitibi, in those areas, certainly the Senate does not concern that many people, and Canadians everywhere think along the same lines.

Mr. Speaker, the amending formula is quite simple. I think a constitutional conference might succeed if the federal Government took the initiative. There have been dozens of unsuccessful attempts, and if she talks to her caucuses from the other Provinces, because she says they defend regional interests, she will find out easily that the cosmetic changes she is proposing for the Senate are clearly not enough to ensure true regional representation. She will soon find out that the Maritimes, the Western Provinces are fed up with a kind of representation that is strictly based on the number of constituents, as we have in the House of Commons. They expect a different kind of representation for another House of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there was a suggestion at one point that the Senate might object to its own reform. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) tried to have us believe that. But the Minister of Justice has no knowledge of the Canadian Constitution. Whether there is a Liberal majority in the Senate or not, if the Government is determined to bring about a true reform, Section 47 of the Constitution allows the House of Commons to pass a resolution, it allows Provinces to pass their own resolutions according to the proportion set out in the amending formula. Because after all Section 47 provides that an Amendment to the Constitution of Canada made by proclamation under Section 38, 41, 42 or 43 may be made without a resolution of the Senate authorizing the issue of the proclamation if, within 180 days after the adoption by the House of Commons of a resolution authorizing its issue, the Senate has not adopted such a resolution and if, at any time after the expiration of that period, the House of Commons again adopts the resolution.